

The Making of
“New Dawn,”
“Return of the Uk-Duk,”
&
“From Dusk to Dawn”
by
David A Clark

Introduction

Science fiction is an odd genre of literature. It defies definition and flies in the face of convention at every turn. There are certain generalities that pertain, usually, but as soon as one believes she or he has it nailed securely, it turns out to be a case of nailing Jell-O to a tree. The single truism, as it applies to science fiction of quality, is that it is plausible fiction laid upon a solid bed of good science. Once it strays beyond the plausibility threshold, it becomes science fantasy.

The legendary science fiction writer Robert Heinlein manages to obfuscate the idea magnificently during a lecture at the University of Chicago, when he states, “a handy short definition of almost all science fiction might read: realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method.” Rod Serling, creator of the seminal 1960s television series *The Twilight Zone*, brings it all together with his inimitable flair when he says, “Fantasy is the impossible made probable. Science fiction is the improbable made possible” (qtd. in DeVoe).

As a liberal arts graduate student at Rollins College in beautiful Winter Park, Florida, I felt especially honored to have been selected in a nationwide competition to submit a series of questions to Wickett d’Orion, author of the runaway best seller *The New Dawn Trilogy*. Non-linear in chronology and complex in structure, the book incorporates and oftentimes intertwines two distinct sub-genres of science fiction: anthropological and post-apocalyptic.

The New Dawn Trilogy is at once entertaining and demanding. Anyone who has read Russell Hoban’s *Riddley Walker*, a post-apocalyptic novel about civilization two

thousand years after a nuclear holocaust, knows the challenge of reading text written, at least partially, in a language both familiar and different. The trilogy, supposedly a translation of a ten-thousand-year-old scroll unearthed in the Four Corners area of the American Southwest, makes ample use of an ancient, albeit fictitious, language that shares much of its form and vocabulary with both Saxon and Chinese. To his credit, d'Orion does include a glossary in the back of the book.

With such a complicated piece of writing, questions abound, and I tried to cover as many aspects as I could of the common grist for the puzzlement mill. Each of my questions is presented precisely as I submitted it, and the author's response follows, unabridged.

Question #1 - Where does *The New Dawn Trilogy* belong within the canon of post-apocalyptic science fiction?

TNDT is a mongrel, a unique hybrid of post-apocalyptic and anthropological sf¹. A plethora of post-pandemic tales exist; Stephen King's *The Stand* immediately comes to mind. Anthropological sf is a much scarcer bird. Ursula K. Le Guin and Chad Oliver certainly own the high ground within that sub-genre. La Guin's novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*, part of her so-called Hainish Cycle, is considered by many to be the gold standard.

However, *TNDT* is, as titled, a trilogy. If each part were to be defined and judged on its own pedigree, we would have no reason to hesitate in assigning each of the three stories its own place in the literary hierarchy. But by combining the works--one post-

¹ In literature, sf is the standard abbreviation for science fiction. Sci-fi was once preferred, but it was soon perverted to "skiffy," which was considered deprecating. Scyfy works for the cable television network, but in literature, sf prevails.

apocalyptic, one anthropological, and one of mixed breed--inside one cover, it becomes unique. And I don't mind saying that I like the word unique as it applies to *TNDT*.

Question #2 - The stories are arranged in a non-linear fashion in the trilogy.

Which one did you write first?

I wrote "New Dawn" first as a response to *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* by David C. Korten. I liked what Korten had to say, that the Earth was at a tipping point, and something had to be done to save it and us. But I disagreed with his proposed methods. He stated, "In Earth Community, violence and competition for dominator power are considered irrational, because they destroy the cooperative nurturing relationships essential to the welfare of the individual and society" (37).

While honorable and admirable, this approach is terribly naive. As a counter to Korten, I obtained a copy of *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet* by Derrick Jensen, Aric McBay, and Lierre Keith. I was already familiar with Keith; her book *The Vegetarian Myth* is pointed and daring. The three-author collaboration was not at all shy or timid; they openly supported the notion that nothing short of full revolution would wrest the world from the hands of the greedy international corporations.

The Deep Green Resistance movement promoted by the book declares that "civilization, particularly industrial civilization, is fundamentally unsustainable and must be actively dismantled in order to secure a livable future for all species on the planet" (Jensen). I know what "actively dismantled" means, and I recognize that this philosophy is in diametrical opposition to the *Kumbayah* thinking of Korten. To my mind, both camps are right, but they are also both wrong. The truth according to d'Orion lies somewhere in the middle.

I am far less optimistic about the success of either approach. I do not believe that any multi-national corporation will back off if a single penny of profit is involved. In fact, Korten tells us, “Professors of law and business commonly teach their students that bringing ethical consideration into corporate decision making is unethical, as it may compromise the bottom line and unjustly deprive shareholders of their rightful return” (132).

But I am also pragmatic enough to realize that revolution will not succeed. The government supports the corporations because the corporations support the elected officials with huge donations to their campaign war chests. While the revolutionaries claim the moral high ground, they will not hold it for long. Against the finest military force money can buy, their Molotov cocktails and spiked trees will not seize the day.

My solution is far more practical, more plausible, and more challenging: apocalypse. Humankind’s rape and murder of Mother Earth will cease only if some terrible tragedy befalls humankind. It could be a city-sized asteroid, massive volcanic activity involving plate tectonics, global thermo-nuclear war, invasion by predatory extra-terrestrials, or a gruesome pandemic. Something needs to wipe out about 75% of humanity; push us back into the stone age. Then and only then will Mother Earth be saved.

I’m sure you noticed that the macabre list of potential disasters tracks well with the literary framework of post-apocalyptic sf. The idea began to form in my mind that I should write such a story, but my persistent optimism required a more positive resolution than is common in the sub-genre.

Once the idea took shape in my mind, the most extraordinary thing happened, something that has never happened to me before or since: I began to dream the story, one episode each night, much like a serialized drama. The dreams were vivid, in high definition and surround sound. And unlike the typical human dream, these remained strong in my mind. Each morning, I would replay the dream from the night before and type it into my computer. I was able to rewind, fast forward, and pause the action. I could skip from one episode to another, and every time it was a complete and faithful rendition of that portion of the story.

One night, after having the typical dream, I typed every detail into my computer, read it over, and satisfied, saved it to the expanding file. That night, I dreamt the same episode again. In the morning, I was puzzled, to say the least. I reran the section again in my head and then reran the previous version of the same part. It was then that I realized that I had missed a segment the first time. I added the missing portion to what I had already typed, and the next night, I dreamt a new episode.

I was seeing the story unfold through the eyes of my protagonist, and I did not know at first that she was a fifteen-year-old girl. When she looked into the mirror on the derelict freighter, I was nothing short of dumbfounded. But the more I considered the situation, the more I began to appreciate the choice that seemed to have been made for me. Dawn was the perfect lead character for my tale.

Allow me to step away from the trilogy for a moment to explain something that should shine some light upon my spiritual life, which cannot help but affect my writing. A few years before I dreamt "New Dawn" I became polytheistic. I had had enough of the vengeful, testosterone-laden patriarchal god of Western religion. In my opinion, birthing

anything, be it a baby person or a baby universe, is a feminine virtue. There had to be a female deity significantly involved in the creation as well as the day-to-day functioning of the cosmos.

I happened upon a book titled *Living In The Lap of Goddess: The Feminist Spirituality Movement in America* by Cynthia Eller. She confirmed everything I felt was missing in modern society, and I was moved in a profoundly spiritual way. The best explanation of my newfound balanced male/female outlook can be found in the words of Lon Milo DuQuette in his book *The Key to Solomon's Key*: "I can only speak for men, and myself in particular. Knowledge of the goddess has introduced me to the other half of myself" (206).

I was absolutely delighted when I discovered the other half of myself. It was much more profound than the hackneyed "getting in touch with my feminine side" New Age rubbish. And I am that my new spiritual outlook on the universe affected my creative process in the formation of the story. Dawn turns out to be a very spiritual young lady in her own right, and in a very polytheistic way. In a way, she represents me.

Back to the story: when I typed the last of the sections, I printed it out and gave it to a colleague for her critique. She really enjoyed the story, and when I told her of my series of dreams and the fact that I could still recall every moment of every dream sequence, she was fascinated. Her only criticism was that she felt that I should include another encounter with the Boneheads. I thought it was a brilliant suggestion.

That night, I dreamt a new sequence--a second major encounter with the boneheads. In the morning, I typed it up and added it to the story. That night, I had no dream, and over the course of the following few weeks, the dream series faded. Soon, I

was able to remember only bits and snippets. In other words, once the story was completed, the dreams went away. It was uncanny, but it was the most amazing experience of my writing career.

That was during the summer of 2011. Once the story was completed, I was very happy with it. In my opinion, it was one of my finer efforts. But there was a feeling inside me, one I had never entertained before, a desire to expand “New Dawn” into a full-length novel. But that would have to wait. I had never written a novel, but I had read enough of them to know that writing one would be a major project, and I didn’t have the time just then.

Question #3 - What led you from the first story to the next two?

“Return of the Uk-Duk” was the second story written. One evening, while chatting with the director of the program I was associated with, the idea of a trilogy was broached: Why not do a prequel and a sequel? she proposed. I was immediately intrigued, and in the blink of an eye, I jettisoned the idea of a novel and began making plans for a trilogy.

There is no limitation in how far back in time a prequel can go, of course. I made the decision early on to travel far into the past. My first inclination was to visit the epoch in which the Neanderthals and the Cro-Magnons cohabited Europe. The Neanderthals had a more robust immune system, while the Cro-Magnons were hunters and gatherers. I wanted visiting aliens to meddle in the cross-breeding and the eventual survival of one group at the expense of the other. However, making the leap from then and there to Dawn in North Carolina would have been problematic.

Serendipity is a part of my life, and for that I am deeply grateful. I happened upon a book by David J. Meltzer titled *First Peoples in a New World: Colonizing Ice Age America*. It provided the ideal solution: Beringia and the Bering Land Bridge; this prehistoric geographical anomaly existed in a fairly narrow window of opportunity: around 12,000 to 10,000 years B.P. [before present]. Meltzer's book covers not only the physical migration of humans from Asia to the Americas, but also their weapons, hunting techniques, and even their language. I already knew that language was going to be a key ingredient in the prequel.

My linguistics training is more or less coincidental. I've studied *Beowulf* in Old English and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in Middle English. I also took three years of conversational German in high school, practiced my language skills while serving three overseas assignments in Germany and the Netherlands with the U.S. Army, and studied specific examples of Saxon and other proto-Germanic languages, as well as Latin and Greek, in various undergraduate courses.

The notion of an advanced alien culture that speaks Saxon is likely to cause a brain cramp, but as Rod Serling once said, "Science fiction is the improbable made possible." Establishing this first basic premise only led to more questions, of course, and these questions had to be answered before I could begin writing: where were the aliens from, why did they choose Earth, were they peaceful or adversarial, was their appearance compatible with humans, had they been here before, and were they planning to leave or stay once their mission was completed?

I have always held a fascination for Constellation Orion; with the surname d'Orion, how could I not? There was no doubt in my creative mind that these aliens

came from there. More than eighty stars make up the constellation, but of these, only seven major stars are easily visible: two for his shoulders, two for his feet, and three that form his belt (“Stars”). The star forming Orion’s right shoulder, Betelgeuse, prodded my imagination.

Betelgeuse, otherwise known as Alpha Orionis, is a massive red supergiant star nearing the end of its celestial life, which means that relatively soon, it will explode as a type II supernova. It has already begun to shed bands of stellar dust at a velocity of 30 km/sec (Davis). To the best of our knowledge, Betelgeuse has no planets, but then again, we don’t know what was blown away when the arcs of ejected material started tearing through the star’s environs. This would provide a plausible motive for an alien race on a theoretical planet to start searching nearby galaxies for a safe haven.

A myriad of sf novels and short stories tell of humanity seeking refuge from a dying Sun, but there are precious few about aliens coming here because their star is about to turn them to toast. As a dedicated spinner of strange and gauzy threads, I saw it as my literary duty to fill that gap.

As for the name of my aliens, such might seem to be a trivial matter, but not so. Meltzer tells us that the oldest human word known to modern science is *tik*, meaning finger (141); this single syllable can be traced back beyond ten thousand years, a perfect point in time for my story. Then it was just playing the name game, from *tik* to *tok* to *tuk*. Because the letters *T* and *D* often change back and forth over time, *Tuk* easily became *Duk*. But as a name, it still needed something to give it a more primitive feel, which I wanted as a contrast to the highly advanced nature of my extra-terrestrials. An echo word, something sing-songish, would work well, so I settled on *Uk-Duk*.

The fictitious home planet of the Uk-Duk was next on my list. I first chose Ming. The Chinese character for Ming is a combination of the characters for sun and moon, and means enlightenment. It seemed to be the perfect name; however, I soon tired of it, and changed it to Manga, after the Japanese comic book art form.

My greatest challenge was in the details of the Uk-Duk mission. Had they been here before? Of course they had, I surmised. They were a superior culture; they certainly would not have come here without adequate information regarding Earth and its emerging intelligent beings. They had visited Earth twice before, gathering data during the Neanderthal/Cro-Magnon epoch that had previously interested me, and earlier as humankind first migrated from Africa. I also gave them reconnaissance satellites, which provided critical data between visits.

But I also wanted to show that even highly advanced civilizations can suffer setbacks at the hand of Mother Nature. A rogue asteroid crashed into the Uk-Duk's data library and obliterated huge amounts of information which had been archived there from their first two visits. When they came to Earth for their third visit, therefore, they were more or less on their own.

I also made it clear to my readers that although the Uk-Duk considered themselves highly advanced and far superior to the humans, that was not necessarily true. Almost as soon as they set foot on Earth, they are attacked by a stampede of Woolly Mammoths. Certainly they were not expecting that, and I made sure they experienced plenty of other surprises along the way. But the attack was a great set-up for the first interaction between the aliens and the humans, and it placed a major character--Orion's future mate--into the Uk-Duk camp.

The destination of the Uk-Duk team should be no surprise to those who paid attention when they read “New Dawn.” In that story, the protagonist leaves Colorado and ends up in a small community called Four Corners in North Carolina. In real life, Colorado joins Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico at a geometric intersection known as Four Corners. It was just too much irony to pass up.

Many readers ask me why I wrote this second story as a chronicle. In truth, I could not write it any other way. “New Dawn” is written in first person, with a female narrator-protagonist. “Return of the Uk-Duk” had to be likewise. And the only plausible way for the second story to be a chronicle is that it be an ancient written record, unearthed ten centuries later, making its discovery more or less contemporary with the beginning of the first.

And, why, indeed, is the prequel the second story in the trilogy? Because to properly understand Orion, we have to meet Dawn first and wonder why she is so capable and self-sufficient. I wrote “Return of the Uk-Duk” second, with full knowledge of what happens, as a result, ten thousand years later. I could not unknow what I already knew about Dawn, and thus the prequel has to be read as I wrote it, after “New Dawn.”

The third story, “From Dusk to Dawn” is a bridge between the two longer stories. I wrote it as a “stand alone” story for those who want just a sample, but I suspect that in most cases, once a toe is dipped into the water, a full emersion will follow.

Question #4 - Why did you use so many the footnotes?

The premise of “Return of the Uk-Duk” is that it was written some ten thousand years ago by an extra-terrestrial. There is no plausible scenario in which it could have

been written in any modern language. There are two rock-solid reasons for this. First, none of the modern languages existed that long ago. Second, even if one did, the aliens would not know it, at least not well enough to transcribe such a complicated document. We are told, after all, that the data archive on Manga was destroyed by a rogue asteroid. It is doubtful that their observation satellites could provide meaningful linguistic intelligence.

As a result, the scrolls would have been written either in the language of the aliens or some ancient terrestrial language. The situation would require the use of an expert translator with a deep linguistic background. As the story proceeds, we learn that the scrolls were written in alien and ancient terrestrial languages, so the scrolls are a sort of Rosetta stone.

The use of footnotes by a translator in such circumstances would be expected, since the resulting translation would be used primarily by academics from a wide range of fields of expertise.

And while I'm on the subject of footnotes, please note that while the story is completely fictional, the footnotes are true, at least as close to true as possible. In a very real way, the footnotes drive the story, or at least guide it.

Question #5 - Why did you use so many alien words in the text?

So many, you say? You should have seen the first draft; it had twice as many alien words. I admit to enjoying the linguistic gymnastics very much, and in the draft, I really got carried away, but after I reduced the number, I felt comfortable with the wonderful way they illuminated the plot and enhanced our understanding of the characters, especially when Orion and Tarus have different words for the same thing.

I wasn't just playing games with the words. Etymology can tell us much about the cultures that had access to the word in the intervening years. In "Return of the Uk-Duk," we are dealing with etymology in reverse. I pick an action, an animal, a description, or an object, and track its development backwards through its evolution, as far back as I can go. From that point, I have to make a plausible leap back even further, to the time of the story. The evolution of certain sounds in typical words remains fairly consistent within language families.

Other factors were involved, as well. The humans coming across the land bridge originated in many different places: Siberia, China, India, Southeast Asia, even the Russian steppes. Of course those place names did not exist, but the geographical locations did. The tribes coming across represented many divergent ethnic groups, and often mixed together along the way.

Another factor to consider, as far as the story is concerned, is the effect the earlier Uk-Duk missions, particularly to Asia and Europe, had on the local languages. There would be no way of knowing, of course, since the archives on Manga were destroyed. But these factors had to be considered by my overactive imagination as I researched and "morphed" known words into earlier forms.

I reveal the primary reason for my using as many alien words as I do; in the translator's Afterword, he confesses to being captivated by the musical rhythm created by the repetitive use of certain words. A good example would be when Orion and Tarus marvel at the *akwernalen* eating the *seden* in the *dryden*. How can one not find such a phrase pleasant and musical? In this vein, I have a confession of my own: I love the word *akwernal*.

While on the subject of squirrels, allow me to take you through the steps I took in deciding what word form to use for squirrel in the story. Through the use of several reference sources, including *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, *Cassell's German English Dictionary*, the online *Chinese Symbols Database Collection*, and the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, I determined that word squirrel can be traced as far back as the fourteenth century.

Earlier forms include the Anglo-French *esquirel*, the Old French (OF) *escurel*, the Vulgar Latin (VL) *scuriolus*, and the Greek *skiouros*, from *skia* (shadow) and *oura* (tail), meaning shadow tail (Harper). The modern German word for squirrel is *das Eichhörnchen*, from *eich*, meaning *oak*, and *hörnchen*, meaning *croissant* (Sasse, Horne, and Dixon). Not exactly musical. The Chinese word for squirrel is 松鼠, or *song-shu*, meaning *tree rat* (Leo).

Unfortunately, none of these forms interested me, and I did not think any of them would add anything to the story. With a little more research, I learned that the original Old English (OE) word for squirrel was *acweorna*, which evolved into the Middle English (ME) word *aquerne*. Sometime between 1300 and 1400, the old word *aquerne* died out, replaced by the new word *squirrel* (Harper).

The Old English word seemed perfect for the story, especially when I decided to make it one of Tarus' words, a human word. But I had to age it from the OE and ME forms. Since the letters *c* and *q* do not exist in the Uk-Duk alphabet, the more archaic-looking *k* was the letter of choice. I also changed the final letter *e* to a more ancient sounding *-al* ending. A final switch from *u* to *w* completed the creation of the Shadrak-Shakaw word *akwernal*. All of that work for one word! Was it worth it? Of course it was.

There are also a couple of instances in which I use two different words for the same thing, one word human and the other Uk-Duk; it is coincidental that both are animals in the story. A bear is both *bher* and *medved*; fish are both *eu* and *fisk*. Let's look at the two words for bear first.

The word bear comes from the OE word *bera*. The Proto-Germanic form is *beron*, the Old Norse form is *björn*, the Old High German (OHG) is *bero*. These all evolved from the Proto-Indo-European {PIE} root *bher*, meaning bright and brown. The ancient Greek word for bear is *arktos*, from which we get our modern word *arctic*; the Latin word is *ursus* (Harper).

Of all of these choices, I found *bher* to be the most attractive, for it looks quite archaic, and I elected to use it without modification. The other version comes directly from the Russian word медведь or *medved*, which means *eater of honey*; *med* (from the Sanskrit *madhu*) means honey, and the added *v* turns the nominative root into a partitive genitive, meaning literally *of honey*. The *-ed* ending, meaning *to eat*, is similar to the Latin verb *edere*, also meaning *to eat*, and which gives us our words *edible* and *eat* (Casselman). The definition and derivation are friendly enough, but the sound of the word itself seems to imply the potential danger of the creature, so I chose to use it without modification, also.

The two words I selected for fish represent very diverse origins. *Fisk* is no doubt recognizable by most readers. The modern German word is *der Fisch*. The OE is *fisc*, as is the Old Saxon and Old High German. The Old Norse word is *fiskr* and the Gothic word is *fisks*. The PIE root is *peisk*, leading to the Latin *piscis* and the Breton *pesk*

(Harper). However, the transition from *p* to *f* or from *f* to *p* is not rare, so all these words are clearly related. I chose *fisk*.

The Chinese word for fish is 魚, pronounced *yu* (Leo). This was a good choice for the story, but in the Uk-Duk alphabet, the letter *y* is pronounced like a long *i*, so I had to change the translated spelling to *eu*. This looks very exotic and functions as the perfect alternative to the Germanic *fisk*.

Question #6 - Would you please explain the aliens' alphabet, numerals, and their intricate system of writing?

A proper answer to this question involves some fairly complex linguistics, so readers who are not interested in plowing through this mass of technical jargon are invited to skip to the next question.

Most, if not all, languages have an oral and a written component. Surely the oral component pre-existed the written one. As the language evolved, users developed a repertoire of sounds which settled into a basic consistency, although it was susceptible to changes over time. When written language occurred, each specific sound was assigned a specific symbol, or letter. This is called discreteness.

The repertoire of sounds is divided into two basic groups: vowels and consonants. Unfortunately, there are more sounds than there are letters. This is because a letter may have more than one pronunciation. For example, the vowel *a* in *ball*, *bat*, and *base* all have different sounds, despite the fact that they are all represented by the same letter.

This seems to be a very inefficient system, but it is what it is. Pronunciation of any given word is, for most people, a matter of rote memorization, a real challenge for

some of us, especially those attempting to learn a language later in life. It seems that young children have a better ability to absorb the vagaries of a language. But there is a better system, one in which each specific sound is assigned a distinct symbol. It is called a phonetic alphabet. Regrettably, the only place we can easily find such an alphabet is in the pronunciation guide for a word in a dictionary.

My thought was that a culture as advanced as the Uk-Duk would have found their way around this problem eons before we meet them. Their alphabet is phonetic; each symbol represents one discrete sound. For this reason, it is divided into four major groups, as opposed to our two. For example, the Uk-Duk have ten vowels, including three for what we would consider the letter *a*.

Vowels are the easier part of most alphabets. They are pronounced with minimal effort through an unrestricted vocal tract. In spoken English, vowels form the nucleus of a syllable, while consonants form the onset and the coda. However, certain consonants nearly encroach on the phonetic territory of the vowels. These consonants are called approximants because they approximate the unrestricted sounds of vowels. The letter *w* in the word *wet* is a good example.

Approximants, nasals, and fricatives are grouped together in one category of Uk-Duk consonants. Nasals are sounds such as those represented by the letters *m* and *n*, in which the air, although not blocked or restricted, is redirected through the nasal passages. Fricatives are produced by nearly blocking the flow of air. There are voiceless and voiced fricatives. The letter *f* represents a voiceless fricative; the sound is produced by directing the air flow over the tongue and through pursed lips. The addition of sound from the voice box changes the *f* to a *v*.

Another group of consonants in the Uk-Duk alphabet is the Full Stop type. These are pronounced by briefly stopping the flow of air at some point in the vocal tract and then quickly releasing the built-up pressure. This results in an explosive discharge of air, such as when one pronounces *p*, *d*, or *b*. Even to the casual observer, these consonants obviously belong together.

The third and final category of Uk-Duk consonants are the digraphs. I sincerely doubt the aliens would know what a digraph is, so this group is strictly my own creation. Digraphs are two consonants which, when used together, represent a sound that differs from the sound of the consonants pronounced separately. For example, we all know the usual pronunciation of the letters *n* and *g*, but when the two appear together, as in the word *ring*, or twice in the word *singing*, the sound of them together is completely different. In English we have a phonetic symbol for this sound, η , but in words, we let the ordinary combination of the two letters carry the burden.

But all of these linguistic and phonetic identities only halfway explain the strange and complex “battle ribbon” text found on the scroll. It took the translator some time to understand that the characters in the middle of the colored rectangles are numerals. In fact, they are a rather primitive number system, not far removed from Roman numerals, except the Uk-Duk numerals include zero.

The colors in the rectangles are what make this text so very special. Years ago, when I was with the armed forces, I had occasion to work with covert programs (aka black ops), including transmission of highly classified information via encoded communications. We were always experimenting with new, more advanced coding methods, and I began thinking about a system that utilized multiple types of encryption.

Some sort of code that incorporated letters, numbers, and colors might be useful because it would be very difficult to break. However, I never had the opportunity to follow up on the idea. When “Return of the Uk-Duk” began to form in my mind, I saw it as a chance to play with my coding idea. I think it turned out rather well. Imagine how difficult it would be to decipher the text if the lists to which the numbers referred were to change on a daily basis!

Anyway, when Orion finally explains her use of the complicated writing system, we are more than willing to forgive her. Well, all of us except the translator, perhaps.

Question #7 - I understand that every science fiction writer buries inside jokes and hidden references to other works within his or her stories. What have you secreted away in your trilogy?

Ordinarily I would respond to such a question with some form of flippant retort, such as, “If I told you, then they wouldn’t be secret anymore, would they?” But since your interest seems to be academic, I will give up some, but not all, of my surprises.

Most of my hidden morsels are to be found in “Return of the Uk-Duk.” For example, the Taku Matua tribe is named for a song by a band named Te Vaka from Tokelau, a small island nation off the coast of New Zealand. They sing most of their songs in their native tongue, Tokelauan, in an effort to preserve the language. Another of their songs, “Tamahana,” which really means precious child, gave me the idea for the TMHN that we see carved over the main gate of the village. By the way, the chief of that village, Koko Ka, is named for Coco Cay, the private island in the Bahamas owned by the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line.

The story contains myriad strange words, most of them from the Uk-Duk, but there are a few words from elsewhere, including the Shadrak-Shakaw. One of these is actually the prefix *mot*. The footnote accompanying its appearance in the story states that it is a negation prefix, similar to our prefix *non*. *Mot* is actually an example of a fascinating cyber language known as *leet*.

Leet is often shown as 1337, the numerals most closely resembling the letters. Many leet words are based on this number-for-letter substitution. The language originated in the 1980s as a way of identifying oneself as *elite*, as in regulars who were deserving of special treatment and respect, as opposed as chat room newcomers, known as newbies or newbs.

Many chat rooms and chat boards developed their own leet. I spent many hours in some music-related chat rooms; one in particular developed leet quite quickly. Some leet terms originated as typos committed by regulars. Two such mistakes that gained rapid acceptance were *floks* for *folks* and *mot* for *not*. *Floks* later evolved further into *flox*. Anyone who did not know what these leet terms meant was obviously a newb and was susceptible to flame attacks if he or she misbehaved. 637 17? (GET IT?)

Another unusual usage can be found in Part Forty of the story, where Orion uses the line, "It took me a full day to restore my calm." It is an odd use of the word *calm* as a noun. This is a nod to the short-lived television series *Firefly* by Joss Whedon. The show takes place five hundred years in the future, and their English has evolved, especially the idiomatic syntax. Characters in the show frequently use the word *calm* in this manner.

Were you paying attention when the Tuktoi and a third of the Uk-Duk departed their comfortable, albeit temporary, home at the mouth of Yosemite Valley for the colder climes of the north? If they traveled all the way to the Arctic Ocean, as was their plan, they would have arrived at the site of the town now known as Tuktoyaktuk, in the Inuvit Region of the Canadian province of the Northwest Territories. Not a far cry from a combination of Tuktoi and Uk-Duk, eh?

One little treasure in “From Dusk to Dawn” is actually my favorite. When Dusk acquires the abandoned wolf pup, she names it Tralfaz. The cast of the Hanna-Barbera animated television show *The Jetsons* includes a dog named Astro. However, that was not his original name. When the Jetson family finds the dog at the pound, his name is Tralfaz. How’s that for trivia?

I will give you one more, a tidbit of self-promotion cleverly disguised as largess. I have already started a sequel to these tales, which I plan to call “Village of Blood.” In the story, another of the planets to which the Uk-Duk fled when Betelgeuse went supernova is named Lórien. This name, of course, is from Tolkien’s mythos of Middle Earth.

Question #8 - What message are you giving to the world with this trilogy?

Several major principles of life are involved in the trilogy. The Uk-Duk, for all of their highly advanced technology, are guilty of some of the lesser traits of many societies. They are elitists, certainly. They believe they are far superior to the humans with whom they interact, but we see many occasions that prove they are just as vulnerable to the effects of Nature as are the native tribes.

In the same vein, the Uk-Duk are a bit racist, as well, although they would probably deny that charge most vehemently. And most surprisingly, they are sexist. The

Kommander is male; the highest ranking female is Orion's mother, a priestess, not a position wielding much political power. Orion's father nearly destroys the team through his opposition to his daughter's rightful claim to be his legitimate and official heir. Tarus, to his credit, sides with his mate, implying that the humans are less sexist than the aliens.

On the bright side, the union of Orion, an alien, and Tarus, a human, signals the advent of a new world order, to the betterment of all. At least I like to think so.

Conclusion

I thank David Clark for his excellent questions, and I congratulate him for being selected in a very tough competition. Best of luck to him in his studies at Rollins College.

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